

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-02 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 IO-03 SSO-00

RSR-01 /059 W

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P 141131 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0177

DAO SAIGON PRIORITY

S E C R E T SAIGON 6351

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS 1981

TAGS: MILI, MOPS, CB, VS

SUBJECT: THE HONG NGU CAMPAIGN AND B-52 STRIKES

REF: A. CAN THO 182

B. CAN THO 141

FOL TEL SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE SAIGON INFO PHNOM PENH FROM CAN
THO DATES APRIL 14, 1973 RPTD TO YOU FOR YOUR INFO:

QUOTE S E C R E T CAN THO 0191

1. DEPUTY MR IV COMMANDER BRIG GEN HOANG MARCH 14 TOLD A
CONSULATE OFFICER THAT THE PHNOM PENH CONVOY HAD NOT LEFT
TAN CHAU, AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT FOR TWO MORE DAYS WHILE
THE 9 TH ARVN DIVISION CLEARS THE EMKON' S EAST BANK NORTH OF
HONG NGU.

2. IN ALMOST THE SAME BREATH, HOANG ONCE AGAIN COMPLAINED
BITTERLY ABOUT THE LACK OF AMERICAN B-52 STRIKES ON THE
CAMBODIAN SIDE OF THE KIEN PHONG BORDER, WHERE ARVN HAS
REPORTED THE LOCATION OF THE NVA 9 TH DIVISION COMMAND,
REAR SERVICE, AND SOME COMBAT UNITS. HIS BOSS, MGEN NGHI,
MADE A LESS STRIDENT REMARK TO THE CONSUL GENERAL LATER IN
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THE MORNING ABOUT THE LACK OF B-52 SUPPORT. IN VOICING HIS COMPLAINT, HOANG IMPLIED THAT THE ARVN 9 TH DIVISION WOULD DO BETTER IN ITS CURRENT CAMPAIGN TO OPEN THE RIVER IF SUPPORTED BY B- 52 STRIKES WITHIN CAMBODIA.

3. WHILE HOANG' S REMARKS NEED TO BE REPORTED, THE LOGIC OF HIS IMPLICATION IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT. RVNAF IS FACED BY NO MORE THAN THREE NVA REGIMENTS IN THE HONG NGU CAMPAIGN AREA. THE FOURTH REGIMENT IN THE NVA 9 TH DIVISION, THE E-2, IS PROBABLY LOCATED TO THE EAST IN THE CAI CAI AREA. OF THE THREE REGIMENTS, TWO INFANTRY AND ONE ARTILLERY, ONLY A PORTION, A REGIMENTAL- SIZED FORCE, IS ACTUALLY COMMITTED TO DISRUPTING RIVER TRAFFIC. THE NVA BATTALIONS ARE UNDERSTRENGTH AND MAY EXCEED NO MORE THAN 125 MEN EACH.

4. DESPITE NVA MORTAR AND ROCKET SUPPORT FROM ACROSS THE CAMBODIAN BORDER AND JUST WITHIN VIETNAM, AND DESPITE CASUALTIES ALREADY SUSTAINED, RVNAF PRESENTLY ENJOYS A CLEAR TROOP AND FIRE POWER SUPERIORITY. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO DISLODGE ITS FOE FROM HONG NGU POSITIONS , INCLUDING THE RIVERBANK, WITHOUT B-52 STRIKES IN NEARBY CAMBODIA. THE B-52' S MIGHT HELP TO REDUCE THE ROCKET FIRE AGAINST TAN CHAU, WHERE THE CONVOY IS STALLED, HOWEVER.

5. WE ARE NOT ENTIRELY CONFIDENT THAT THE CAMBODIAN STRIKE SITES THAT ARVN PROPOSED ARE IN FACT THE HEADQUARTERS AND UNIT LOCATIONS OF THE NVA 9 TH DIVISON. ARVN INTELLIGENCE IS NOT THAT GOOD. MORE IMPORTANTLY, EVEN THMKGH THE SITES HAVE BEEN BOMBED IN THE PAST, WE HAVE NO CURRENT INFORMATION ON THE AREA' S CIVILIAN POPULATION.

6. HOANG WISHES US TO BELIEVE THAT THE STRIKES WOULD ENCOURAGE RVNAF TO KEEP CONVOYS FLOWING A LITTLE MORE READILY ALONG THE RIVER. WHAT HOANG MAY REALLY BE ASKING FOR IS A VISIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF U. S. SUPPORT FOR RVNAF' S INTENSIFICATION OR EXPANSION OF THE WAR, WHICH THE MR IV COMMANDER DESCRIBED APRIL 7 (REF B). IT IS POSSIBLE HOANG, LIKE NGHI, REGARDS THE B-52 STRIKES AS A CONVINCING SYMBOL OF AMERICAN ACQUIESCENCE AND EVEN SUPPORT.

BARNES
UNQUOTE
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SECRET

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON06351
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730443/aaaaipat.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: A.CAN THO 182, B.CAN THO 141
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Dec-2001 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 980120
Subject: THE HONG NGU CAMPAIGN AND B-52 STRIKES
TAGS: MILI, MOPS, CB, VS
To: EA
SAIGON
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005